

Web-Chat Date: June 14, 2011

Topic: Differentiated Instruction

Abstract:

An interesting quote by Lilian Katz, Professor Emerita of Early Childhood Education at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, mentioned:

When a teacher tries to teach something to the entire class at the same time, "chances are, one-third of the kids already know it; one-third will get it; and the remaining third won't. So two-thirds of the children are wasting their time."

Brain research also confirms what experienced teachers have always known, including some of the factors below:

- No two children are alike
- No two children learn in the same identical way
- An enriched environment for one student is not necessarily enriched for another
- In the classroom, children should be taught to think for themselves

From the last web-chat, we have identified "Differentiated Instruction" as one of the trends and interests to further survey for best EFL pedagogical practices. What is "Differentiated Instruction?" What is the comparison between the traditional classroom instruction and the differentiated classroom instruction? What type of activities, lesson plans, assessment methods, and general educational philosophy determine to be differentiated instruction? Why does it matter which pedagogical approaches teachers should embrace?

Transcript:

Damon Anderson: Everyone, welcome to today's web chat. Please feel free to submit any pre-chat comments or questions.

Damon Anderson: Hi Phil. Welcome to the chat. We will begin in about 20 minutes.

Damon Anderson: Hello everyone. Welcome to our web chat. Let's begin!

Bill Templer (Chang daeng): How is the tyranny of grading a major barrier to 'individualized' learning? Big question. Portfolio assesment one option maybe.

Phanisara: Or general rubric assessment. With peer review. Let students help each other out.

Damon Anderson: Bill, it is great to see you all the way from Bulgaria. Grading should not be a tyranny or a tool of discipline. If you want a growth mindest, you need to focus on the learning aspect, not the assessment aspect.

thuypham: Hi everybody. I'm Thuy Pham from Hanoi, Vietnam

Damon Anderson: I agree with Khun Nina. Rubrics help to lessen the "tyranny" of the assessment and make it learner friendly.

Bill Templer (Chang daeng): What goes into the formal record? I am forced to give grades on a scale of 6 down to 2.

Damon Anderson: Hi Thuy Pham, and everyone. Welcome to the chat.

Phil: Bill raises a good point. Is there a difference between what / how we teach and how we evaluate?

Damon Anderson: Phil and Bill, there should not be a difference between how you teach and how you evaluate. If students know up front what the criteria are for evaluation (i.e., in a rubric), they can work toward the grade they want.

Bill Templer (Chang daeng): big difference in my experience incalculable

Bill Templer (Chang daeng): explain rubric a bit

Phanisara: With assessment like rubric, students can learn to be life-long learners. Able to monitor their learning progress. Especially when each student learn at a different pace.

Damon Anderson: In a rubric, the students see the categories that are important for a task or project and what the criteria for each to get a score at the 0 to 6 level (according to Bill's levels). Then they know what the important points are and how to work to the highest score they are capable of.

Phil: Damon I know, you ARE right, but faced with implementing such change, ... It can be daunting.

thuypham: Teachers should work out the rubrics together with colleagues, and with students, too. Agree with Bill T. They should understand the rubrics

Damon Anderson: I agree with Thuy Pham.

Phanisara: From Wikipedia: A rubric is an assessment tool for communicating expectations of quality. Rubrics support student self-reflection and self-assessment as well as communication between assessor and assessee. A rubric is a set of criteria and standards typically linked to learning objectives that is used to assess or communicate about product, performance, or process tasks.

Damon Anderson: Actually, creating the rubrics is not at all daunting. The first one or two may be a little challenging, but after that, you will see that they are easy to create. They are sooooo useful to both the teacher and the students.

Bill Templer (Chang daeng): we need to translate Wikipedia into English

Ubon Sanpatchayapong: Hello, this is Ubon from Thailand TESOL

Phanisara: Thank you Dr. Ubon for joining us :)

Damon Anderson: In a differentiated class, students have mixed abilities. You want them all to be able to participate and to achieve some growth in the class. So, if the instruction is student centered, this is easier than if it is teacher centered or materials centered.

thuypham: In my experience, strong students are not quite willing to work with weak ones, or let them peer check their works. What do you do? Rubrics, criteria are important then. Students must agree with the rubrics to make them feel happy with the assessment

Phanisara: Differentiated Instruction forces teachers to look at students as individuals.

sandra: hi, i'm sandra from Myanmar

Bill Templer (Chang daeng): I try to convince students to be autonomous free voluntary readers using extensive reading and this is hard to squeeze into a rubric however defined

Phil: It also forces STUDENTS to look at themselves as individuals. That is also a change.

Bill Templer (Chang daeng): it is in fact self-discovery

Damon Anderson: In a reading class, the most important thing is what you do with the information in the reading. Simple comprehension questions don't really tell you if someone has understood what they read, only that they saw the information. You need to have students perform tasks to demonstrate understanding.

Ubon Sanpatchayapong: I have quite a big class this year. There are 55 of them, and yes, they are of different language abilities. Half of them are weak in English!

Phanisara: Khun Bill, then perhaps your rubric will just have to cover general competency for accomplishing tasks of the assigned extensive learning activities.

Jimmy: Jimmy here, in Bangkok

thuypham: Yes, different abilities, so group work are useful. Sometimes you have all strong Ss in 1 group, then you cross group to mix them with weak ones. I often ask the strong Ss to be leaders

sandra: I agree with Damon the student center approach

thuypham: It works well esp. with YLs

Bill Templer (Chang daeng): the most important things students learn cannot be tested in my classes

thuypham: You should have tasks of different level of difficulty too

sandra: it help students self exploring

Damon Anderson: You are absolutely right, Thuy Pham. Good point.

Ubon Sanpatchayapong: I agree with you in implementing groupwork into classroom use. It works in my case.

thuypham: Agree with Bill, YLs does not like to be tested

thuypham: Thanks Damon

Phanisara: Khun Bill, agree the most important learning probably cannot be "tested" but could be monitored, reflected, assessed NON-traditionally.

Damon Anderson: Not all assessment comes from a "test", but if you do tasks and projects, you can easily assess the students at various stages in a non-test way.

Jimmy: with rubrics and differentiation, it seems we are thinking about differentiating the outcome or expectation of the work. There are other ways to differentiate.

Ubon Sanpatchayapong: Students share their knowledge, they have motivation to learn, and they also learn from one another. Class is noisy, though.

sandra: doing group work with mix-abilities classroom works well

Phil: Bill, can you say more about what cannot be tested?

thuypham: You are right Phanisara

Bill Templer (Chang daeng): Extensive Reading extensive Listening says students discover materials at their own comfort zone level this is a good path to differentiated learning a main path Do any of you encourage Extensive Reading outside class?

Bill Templer (Chang daeng): In Thailand pretty rare In Vietnam I have no idea

Bill Templer (Chang daeng): Phanisara, you're right But this means small classes and students who come to class

Ubon Sanpatchayapong: I agree with Khun Nina. Testing and learning sometimes cannot go together. My students will be stressful if they know I will test what they have learned in class.

Chollada ICT: Hello kha , sorry to be late , I've just finished the class.

thuypham: We must accept/ learn to accept 'good noise', Ubon

Damon Anderson: Bill, I have found here in Thailand that if students know why they are reading and what they need to get from the reading, they will do it. It is when they feel they have to try and memorize or know everything that they shy away from it.

Phil: I like a noisy class!

Ubon Sanpatchayapong: :) Yes, good noise is always audible!

thuypham: Extensive reading is good for student's own pace I think.

Chollada ICT: My class at Islamic College of Thailand is so big , so it is sure that one third of all won't listen to me all the lesson.

thuypham: I use graded readers

Bill Templer (Chang daeng): Tutorial structuring is an old idea I wish I had tutorials with students That would individualize a lot

Bill Templer (Chang daeng): Students should understand their 'learning style' with many of my students, I don't know what it is

Ubon Sanpatchayapong: Sorry all my dear friends I have to join the meeting now. Nice to chat with you all! Bye for now :(

thuypham: or I ask Ss to find their books they like to read, then answer some questions, like: what's it about? what do you like most about the story/ why/

Phanisara: I agree with Jimmy. Differentiated process is more than just testing. Also involve integrating different learning activities fitted for individual learners.

Bill Templer (Chang daeng): Chollada makes good point we all have to look at the 'social ecology' of our learning situations

Chollada ICT: Tutorial , I have this one for my students too. It's better way to make the students interested in lessons.

thuypham: Bill, You can use the MI survey at the beginning of the course

Damon Anderson: There is a simple rule that any technique or approach will only satisfy the learning style of 1/3 of your students, so you need to vary what you do and how you present new things in your class.

Bill Templer (Chang daeng): yes MI survey I never have tried that

sandra: What does MI survey mean?

thuypham: to find out of what learning styles your Ss are

Chollada ICT: Yes, Bill. I have another activities , which is easier than the normal lesson for them , or maybe the game or an activity to turn them back to learn. but they are so naughty.

Phanisara: MI = Multiple Intelligences Survey

thuypham: I often refer to my Ss 's own situations, I mean , personalise

Bill Templer (Chang daeng): here a link: <http://surfaquarium.com/MI/inventory.htm>

thuypham: Multiple Intelligences, Sandra

Chollada ICT: Thank you Bill , I will visit though.

Jimmy: I find differentiation possible by the amount of support I give to students. Tasks and outcomes don't necessarily have to be different. You do need to know your students though and the problems they are likely to face.

Damon Anderson: Jimmy that is true. Some students require more scaffolding than others. Scaffolding is something you can prepare in advance and give to students as they need it.

sandra: thanks. it really works when we know our learners' learning style

thuypham: Thanks Bill

Bill Templer (Chang daeng): so give MI survey then begin to get students to suggest what is best for them after some general rubric is laid out maybe an approach in some 'social ecologies of learning'

Damon Anderson: Don't spoon feed your students. Let them struggle a little before giving them any scaffolding. Help them to stretch.

Bill Templer (Chang daeng): it boils down to making learners more autonomous but a really autonomous learner, even in practical language classes, may decide class is not necessary

thuypham: Agree with Bill and Damon.

Phanisara: I agree with Jimmy; knowing our students are very important. Sometimes learning how to pragmatically encourage them will help them to achieve more than any "right" level of learning activities assigned.

Damon Anderson: Bill, I disagree. Autonomous learning does not mean throwing out your resources, such as the instructor.

thuypham: Sts don't want to learn when things are too easy or too difficult

sandra: good point Damon, we teacher should encourage them to think more and find solution by themselves as much as we can

Bill Templer (Chang daeng): I gave a lot of scaffolding on some things, like Krashen's ideas which I try to turn students on to. But find many students build nothing a scaffold standing in an empty field

Damon Anderson: Bill, if that is the case, then you are presenting the wrong scaffold.

thuypham: so we have to find out zone of development approximant (ZPD), i.e. how much scaffolding is enough

Phanisara: Irrelevant learning activities, regardless of how right the level, will not produce authentic passion for learning.

Damon Anderson: That is correct, Thuypham.

Bill Templer (Chang daeng): yes Sandra by themselves the goal is to make them not need teachers I really stress 165/3 You're in class maybe 3 hours in a week of 168 what you doing with therest of your time and life?

Bill Templer (Chang daeng): I think preraring for tests is pretty irrelvant learning But this is what I'm constrained to do and students expect that under the given regimes of testing

Phanisara: More of the reason that new generation of teachers need to provide the tools and ways to use the tools---so students can become independent life-long learners.

Damon Anderson: Bill, if students see relevance in the tasks and projects you present to them, and those activities lead toward skills and knowledge that will help them pass the tests, then I can't see what the problem is. You don't need to teach exactly to the test.

thuypham: Yeah, you want them to read extensively, you have to guide them find the right material, tell them how many new words per page is enough

Bill Templer (Chang daeng): I have repeatedly tried to get students into journal writing it is at the core of individualizing and self-discovery but everywhere I've been in Asia, and in Bulgaria, resistant students

Phanisara: If we teach our students right, they will be able to handle whatever test regime there is in and outside the classroom settings.

Chollada ICT: YES, we should make the rubric ,and let the students know what will they be , if they need more marks in their rubrics.

Damon Anderson: Bill perhaps the way you present the journal does not lead the students to see how writing the journal will ultimately help them with their learning and thus success on the exam (indirectly or directly).

thuypham: Journal is good for Ss, I agree, but maybe your Ss are not motivated enough to write it

sandra: we should teach them how to try to overcome the test effectivel instead of we teach what exactly in the test is not stimulate them to learn

Phanisara: I agree Aj. Chollada. Students can become more involved in their learning goals and objectives via rubric process.

thuypham: I myself try to write a diary sometimes, then give up in the middle

Damon Anderson: It is important to keep the goals and objectives of doing a long-term project in front of the students.

Phil: I have never been able to kkp a diary or jhournal -- even in English. It just doesn't interest me.

Bill Templer (Chang daeng): Alfie Kohn has written a lot on 'de-grading education' (his pun intended) and I think important reading for teachers everywhere

Damon Anderson: A journal is a long-term project. If no one ever reads or responds to the students' journals, they will lose interest in writing them.

Bill Templer (Chang daeng): Damon you may be right though I have tried to integrate journal idea into what is a 'regime' of assessment I had some success in Laos almost zilch in Thailand, provincial working-class students

thuypham: but if Ss know that journal helps them form ideas, increase vocabulary, improve organisation, which is quite helpful in a written/ writing test then they will write

Damon Anderson: Yes, Thuypham. Good examples.

thuypham: I think maybe brainstorming/ writing is more useful?

Bill Templer (Chang daeng): Thuypham, if students 'know' is big aim They have to come to see it as really helpful

Phanisara: Journal writing doesn't work for everyone, certainly not for every country. It can be ONE option for learning and reflection activities. But it should not be forced for everyone to participate.

Damon Anderson: Bill and Thuypham, it really depends on your reason for the writing exercise.

Damon Anderson: I agree with Khun Nina.

Bill Templer (Chang daeng): Most of my students accept that Extensive Reading would help all aspects of their English, including writing and speaking But they don't have the resources to do it well I push VOA Special English online But most don't want it They have few books at their level and can afford to buy almost nothing

Chollada ICT: I like your examples , Thuypham.

Chollada ICT: and agree with k. Nina.

Damon Anderson: Teaching students how to scaffold their own reading might be a good option for you Bill. Have you tried that?

thuypham: I think when we ask Ss to write journals, we may ask them to share some parts to get comments, kind of short story or article put on a wall paper

Damon Anderson: Thuypham, that is true if the journals are public. But if they are private or semi-private, that is not the case. I think it is better sometimes to have the students write more public journals that can be shared.

Phanisara: VOA can definitely be one of the options. But when we find that the students might not be excited about this, then we might try to see other available English medium that they will likely want to engage in their learning activities. Students survey is important. Ask them what they might want to use to learn in class.

Jimmy: We sometimes write journals in history. My students seem to like writing as a famous person.

Bill Templer (Chang daeng): Social class background of students in any country a big factor The elite students in Thailand will be more 'open' to individualizing than plurality of more ordinary working-class students At least that is a testable hypothesis

Damon Anderson: Actually, journals are old school these days. We could ask students to keep a Learning Facebook or a Learning Blog.

thuypham: Bill, finance is a problem in Vietnam too. I sometimes ask Ss to bring books they have to the class to share with friends. I mean we create a "shared bookcase"/ mini library in their class, then Ss borrow or lend each other

Chollada ICT: And for all , the teachers should prepare and create their lessons to motivate and make the students interested in lesson so they will pay attention to study . We can teach them with the happiness. that is the biggest job of the teachers.

Bill Templer (Chang daeng): I have recommended the magazine MERLYN'S PEN (online) for student independent reading It is written by teens

Damon Anderson: Thuypham, I love the idea of a "shared bookcase" whether real or virtual. Excellent idea.

Bill Templer (Chang daeng): Yes Thypham good idea and "copyleft" is the necessary way to expand that

Phanisara: Great idea Thuypham!

thuypham: Yes Damon, that's why I say part of the journal, not all. Yes public journal is a good idea.

thuypham: Even the required supplementary reading can be shared. I often teach minority students, they are from poor mountainous areas

Bill Templer (Chang daeng): Regarding reading, www.topics-magazine.com is written by EFL students and appeals to students they can also write for it

sandra: Great idea Thuypham for student's extensive reading skill and then we should asked them to write book review as well, what do you think?

Phanisara: Agree with Aj. Chollada--encouraging students to love learning and be happy in their endeavor is very important for teachers. Once students WANT and happy to learn, they will.

Damon Anderson: Good chat today. We are almost out of time. Does anyone have suggestions for a topic for our July web chat?

Phanisara: Wow, book review....great suggestion Sandra!! True authentic reading activity!

thuypham: Some charity organisations like British Council , or American information center in my country give free the old / out dated news paper and magazines, they are still good though

Bill Templer (Chang daeng): My Malaysian students remarkably good at writing and presenting their own small dramas This is another path I also found readers theater with Thai students one of the the best ways to get them interested in classroom work graded plays

Bill Templer (Chang daeng): I think a main topic is how to integrate more drama (however defined) into all of this

thuypham: Yes, Sandra, but we must teach them how to write reviews, not easy right?

Phil: Bill, just tried to bring up topics-magazine.com. didn't work. Are you sure about the address?

Damon Anderson: Drama is an interesting topic. It brings up the concept of masks and hiding behind masks, which takes away the sting of making mistakes.

Phanisara: Drama is a good topic. Though that's really show learning differentiation for me---because for me, I never like drama activities. I can go along for the experience. But that's not my learning style. For some, this is super learning acting out.

Phil: Turning dramas in to "movies" is good to.

sandra: in our classroom students are encourage to read at least one book a week and write book review and share each other

thuypham: Yes, I like the topic: Using literature to teach English

Bill Templer (Chang daeng): www.topics-mag.com

sandra: yes, we give them sample format to create themselves to write

Bill Templer (Chang daeng): Encourage students to write We had a whole group of journalism students in Bulgaria put a special feature into the magazine

thuypham: literature here can be poems, short stories, films drama

Phanisara: Thank you very much for joining us today. You are all so wonderful.

Chollada ICT: Good Sandra , if the students read more , they will know much more .

Bill Templer (Chang daeng): students are very good at reading a story and then turning it into a skit or play I assure you even shy students in the Thai provinces

Chollada ICT: Yes, Thank you for having me kha

Damon Anderson: Thank you all for this good chat today! We look forward to seeing you on July 12th for our next chat.

thuypham: yes, esp. their own stories. We ask them to write stories, then turn them into drama and act them out. ?

sandra: thorough extensive reading to integrated skill for students to improve

Phil: bye. Thanks.

Bill Templer (Chang daeng): Yes Thypham this worked for us in Laos

Chollada ICT: Ba bye kha

sandra: thanks everyone by sharing great ideas

sandra: bye. see you

thuypham: Thanks all

Chollada ICT: I have a meeting now , bye

Phanisara: Bye everybody. See you next time.

thuypham: So what is the topic next chat? Can we finalise now?

Damon Anderson: Khun Nina will send out the topic of the next chat. We need to go through the transcript and get all the ideas clearly. Look for Khun Nina's email, or you can see the topic and abstract here the week before the chat. Thank you, thuypham.

Chollada ICT: Yes, thank you very much kha

thuypham: Thank you Damon

sandra: Thank you Damon.

Damon Anderson: Thank you all. The chat for today is now closed.
